

1 IMPRESSED EMBLEM AND METHOD FIELD OF INVENTION

The present invention relates to an engraved cover sheet which when placed in mating engagement with an emblem, in the presence of heat and pressure, causes the impression on the cover sheet to be impressed on the emblem. The present invention further relates to a method for impressing a desired pattern on an emblem.

BACKGROUND ART

Emblems have been widely used to apply a variety of designs, patterns, numerals, names and logos onto many different types of substrates. Emblems have found particular use on sports jerseys, jackets and the like. Design emblems incorporating trademark indicia or licensed characters have also become increasingly popular.

To add to the design characteristics or trademark indicia of an emblem, prior art techniques have disclosed methods for embossing a desired lettering or design pattern onto an emblem.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,322,783 discloses a method for heat-embossing a synthetic woven material by use of a heat-resistant distortable intermediate material between the heat-embossing die and the target material that is subject to high adhesive properties when melted during the embossing process.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,298,031 relates to a method for embossing and decorating a thermoplastic velvet-like fabric. In the '031 patent, a transfer sheet supporting a thermally-activated decoration is simultaneously passed with a fabric between two rolls which are under pressure with respect to each other. At least one of the rolls is engraved so as to cause embossing of the fabric. The passing of the fabric and transfer sheet between the rolls is carried out at a temperature sufficient to activate the decoration and allow the transfer of the decoration to the embossed portions of the fabric.

U.S. Pat. No. 4,581,278 directed to thermo-imprinting of one or more surfaces, uses a heat-transfer cover and a release layer pigmented, low molecular weight polyolefin. The imprint is made by bringing the transfer layer into contact with the surface of an object while applying heat.

One significant problem with the prior art methods for emblem impressing is that such methods require tooling a die with the desired impression and then impressing the emblem with the die. For each individual pattern that is desired, a separate die must then be manufactured that is configured in the shape of the desired impression or design. Such a method of impressing an emblem is both time consuming and very expensive. Moreover, since a die must be re-tooled for each new design or logo, this embossing technique can only be utilized for large scale production. In many instances, smaller custom orders for impressed emblems would not be able to afford the cost associated with custom tooling a die.

Accordingly, it is an object of this invention to facilitate the production and use of impressed emblems. A related object is to reduce the cost of producing suitable impressed emblems and reduce the amount of materials required in conjunction with this method.

An additional object of the present invention is the provision of a method for simultaneously impressing an emblem with a desired pattern, and heat-fusing the emblem in position on the surface of a substrate, wherein the method utilizes conventional apparatus and is relatively simple and cost-effective.

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Another object of the present invention is to provide a method of impressing an emblem without impairing or damaging the underlying substrate.

One more object of this invention is to facilitate marking fabrics with trademark indicia in a manner that is aesthetically pleasing and cost effective.

A final object of the present invention is to produce an impressed emblem without requiring the expensive step of tooling a die to serve as the transfer technique for the impressed pattern.

In carrying out the above objects of the invention, a cover sheet for impressing a pattern on the surface of an emblem is disclosed which includes a cover sheet having a base layer and a release coating thereon, wherein the release coating exhibits an impression complementing the desired pattern, such that when the coating is placed in registry with an emblem and heat and pressure are applied on the cover sheet toward the emblem, the desired pattern is formed on the emblem.

This invention further provides an impressed emblem including an emblem having an upper thermoplastic layer and a lower adhesive layer; a cover sheet having a base layer and a release coating thereon, wherein the coating exhibits an impression complementing the desired pattern; and the upper thermoplastic layer and the release coating being placed into mating engagement with one another such that upon the application of heat and pressure on the cover sheet toward the emblem, the upper thermoplastic layer is impressed with the desired pattern.

The present invention further discloses a method of impressing a desired pattern to an emblem and a method for impressing a desired pattern to an emblem during simultaneous attachment of the emblem to a substrate. In a preferred embodiment the surface of the emblem is embossed or debossed slightly to form indicia, such as a trademark or the like, which is legible within about four feet of a viewer, but not substantially therebeyond. This enables a sports numeral, for example, appearing on a sports jersey to be identified with a trademark or other message which does not detract from the principle identifying function of the numeral.

This thermal impressing method preferably utilizes a cover sheet, the cover sheet is made up of a base layer with a release coating applied thereon. The cover sheet has an impression complementing the desired pattern. The impression can consist of raised surfaces or engraved, grooved or rigid surfaces. To create the impressed emblem, the release coating is matedly applied to the emblem, such that, upon application of heat and pressure on the cover sheet and toward the emblem, the emblem becomes impressed with the desired pattern. In one embodiment, the same application of heat and pressure used to bring about the impressing, is simultaneously used to adhere the emblem onto a desired substrate. With this method, the emblem is impressed and adhered to an underlying substrate, in one step.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an impressed emblem applied to a substrate;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged view of the impressed lettering of FIG. 1 taken at the circular area 2 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view taken on the line 3—3 of FIG. 2, showing the raised, impressed markings or desired pattern on the emblem;

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of a multi-colored emblem without any impressed markings or desired pattern;

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FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional view taken on the line 5—5 of FIG. 4;

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of a cover sheet;

FIG. 7 is an enlarged view of the cover sheet of Figure taken at the circular area 7 of FIG. 6;

FIG. 8 is a cross-sectional view taken on line 8—8 of FIG. 7, showing the indentations on the release coating;

FIG. 9 is a side view of the platens positioned for placement of the emblem in mating engagement with the cover sheet;

FIG. 10 is a side view of the platens in operative position to apply heat and pressure and effectuate emblem impressing and emblem attachment onto the substrate;

FIG. 11 is a perspective view of an impressed emblem; and

FIG. 12 is a cross-sectional view taken along lines 12—12 of FIG. 11 showing the indentations of the fabric layer.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

The present invention eliminates the expensive production of patterned and three-dimensional emblems and converts a formerly complex, multi-step process into a few simple steps whereby an emblem can be adhered onto a substrate and, at the same time, the emblem may be impressed with a desired pattern.

The term "impress" as used throughout the specification is defined hereinafter as the act of producing a mark formed by or as if by pressure. The term "impression" as used in the specification is defined as the effect produced by impressing. The term "impressed" or "impress" is thus defined so as to include the production of raised marks such as bosses and engraved marks such as ridges and grooves. Accordingly, an impression is intended to include both raised markings, embossed markings above the surface, and engraved or debossed ridges or grooves made below the surface. Furthermore, the term "complement" or any variation thereof such as "complementary," "complementing," or "complemental" is defined as one of two mutually completing parts.

FIG. 1 illustrates one example of an impressed emblem 10. The impressed lettering pattern 12 depicted in FIG. 1 is but one example of the many designs, numerals, logos and other indicia which may be impressed on an emblem. In the illustrated example, the impressed lettering pattern 12 serves as an aesthetically pleasing trademark identifier. Similarly, it is contemplated that sports garments, in particular, sports jerseys can be impressed with the NFL or NBA logos to function as a means for trademark identification in other instances, the impressing can constitute a desired design pattern. FIG. 2 shows an enlarged version of the impressed lettering pattern 12 on the emblem.

In a preferred embodiment, the lettering pattern 12 will be only faintly or slightly legible, for example, at not more than about four feet from the viewer. Thus, the pattern 12 will not detract from the principal identifying function of the emblem.

As shown in FIG. 3, the impressed emblem 10 of the present invention includes an upper thermoplastic layer 14, an upper adhesive layer 16, a lower thermoplastic layer 18, a lower adhesive layer 20 and the substrate 22 on which the impressed emblem 10 is adhered, as shown in FIG. 1. While FIGS. 1-5 depict an emblem having an upper and lower thermoplastic layer 14, 18 and an upper and lower adhesive layer 16, 20, this invention is not limited in any way to the

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depicted emblem. On the contrary, the emblem shown in FIGS. 4 and 5, is simply one way to assemble a multi-layered emblem where the lower thermoplastic layer 18' is cut to the same shape but a larger size than the upper thermoplastic layer 14' such that when the two thermoplastic layers are placed one on top of another, the lower thermoplastic layer 18' extends beyond the periphery of the upper thermoplastic layer 14' and serves as an outline. The emblem can also be a simple structure having an upper thermoplastic layer with a lower adhesive layer thereon. Any such variation of an emblem is suitable for purposes of impressing a pattern thereon. The upper and lower thermoplastic layers 14, 18 or 14', 18' are preferably one of the following: polyurethane, polyester, polyamide, EVA, thermoplastic styrene butadiene, rubber, and blends thereof. The lower and upper adhesive layers are preferably either a polyester, polyurethane, or polyamide adhesive or blends thereof.

FIG. 3 further illustrates one possible impressed emblem. FIG. 3 shows an emblem having raised or embossed markings on the upper thermoplastic layer 14. Again, the present invention includes impressed emblems, both embossed or raised emblems and debossed emblems having markings below the surface.

FIGS. 4 and 5 further depict the differences between an emblem 24 before impressing and an impressed emblem 10. As shown in FIG. 5, the upper thermoplastic layer 14' of the emblem before impressing has a substantially flat surface when compared to the upper thermoplastic layer 14 of the impressed emblem 10, the impressions thereon are readily detectable. FIGS. 4 and 5 also illustrate the emblem itself, in contrast to FIGS. 1-3 which show the emblem 10 on a substrate 22.

FIG. 6 depicts the impressed cover sheet 26 which is used to create an impressed emblem, as shown in FIG. 1. The cover sheet 26 can be either engraved or embossed depending on the emblem impression that is desired. If an embossed emblem is desired, a complementary engraved pattern is etched into the cover sheet. Likewise, if an emblem is desired with a grooved ridged pattern, the cover sheet 26 is embossed with the complementing pattern. The cover sheet may be impressed with any desired logo, lettering or design. One example is the engraved Stahls' lettering pattern 28, depicted in FIG. 6. With the use of a laser-cutting device or a precision knife, intricate patterns may be engraved into the cover sheet 26 for subsequent embossing on an emblem. With the use of a stamp, the cover sheet 26 can be embossed with raised markings in a desired pattern. FIG. 7 further depicts an enlarged view of a letter pattern 12 which can be impressed on the cover sheet 26.

The engraved cover sheet 26, a cross-section of which is depicted in FIG. 8, comprises a base layer 30 with a release coating 32 applied to the base layer 30. As can be seen in FIG. 8, the indentations 33 that are made during the impressing process are confined to the release coating 32 so that the base layer 30 is left intact and can be used as a support means for the release coating 32. Accordingly, if the cover sheet 26 is to be engraved, the engraving must be adjusted so as not to cut deeper than the thickness of the release coating 32. The base layer 30 of the cover sheet 26 is preferably paper, fabric or plastic. However, if plastic is used as the base layer 30, the plastic must have a melting point that is sufficiently high so that during the impressing and heat-sealing processes, the base layer 30 remains intact. The base layer 30 is most preferably paper. In a preferred embodiment, the release coating 32 can be silicone, vinyl, Thermofilm®, or any polyurethane. Thermofilm® is a registered product of Stahls' Inc. Thermofilm® is a two-layer